

## **ANNEX 15 (ESF-15)**

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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**PRIMARY:** Office of The Adjutant General, South Carolina Emergency Management Division

**SUPPORT:** SC Department of Health and Environmental Control; SC Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; SC Department of Agriculture; SC Department of Natural Resources; SC Law Enforcement Division; SC Department of Labor License and Regulation; SC Commission for Minority Affairs

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Generation of timely public information coordinated with the appropriate level of government is essential to avoid or minimize loss of life and property if a disaster is imminent or has occurred. Before, during, and after emergency operations, the public will be apprised through reports to the news media, through the internet, and through the Emergency Alert System (EAS).
- B. State services and assistance provided under this function shall include the delineation of responsibilities and protective actions to be taken so as to provide the general public with essential information and the documentation of emergency actions and operations implemented or proposed by written, verbal, or photographic means.

#### **II. MISSION**

Provide effective public information through coordination with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to minimize loss of life and property before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.

#### **III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

- A. The South Carolina Emergency Management Division is responsible for all ESF-15 administrative, management, planning, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery activities to include developing, coordinating and maintaining the ESF-15 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). All ESF-15 supporting agencies will assist the South Carolina Emergency Management Division in the planning and execution of the above. All ESF-15 personnel will be trained on the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command and integrate those principles into all ESF-15 planning and response operations.
- B. Disaster and emergency information from South Carolina government shall be clear, concise, and accurate information regarding the existing

situation, actions being taken by authorities, and those to be taken by the population. Every effort will be made to prevent and counter rumors, hearsay, and inaccuracies.

- C. Coordination with all appropriate departments, agencies, and organizations will be performed to the maximum extent, to ensure accurate, timely, and consistent emergency public information.
- D. On behalf of the Governor, the Director, SCEMD, through ESF-15, is responsible for informing the public of emergency and disaster operations within the state. The dissemination of public information during emergency and disaster operations is done with the advice and consent of the Governor's Director of Communications, who reserves the authority to intervene, to assume control, or to disseminate supplementary public information at any time. ESF-15 will keep the Governor's Director of Communications informed of media-related events as they unfold and will provide such information on a continuing and timely basis.
- E. Public information, public relations, or public affairs personnel of any state agency or department will be made available to augment ESF-15 when requested, to include non-English speaking individuals and/or special needs populations.
- F. The South Carolina EAS will be activated appropriately according to established area, state, and national EAS procedures.
- G. A coordinated effort to report and document emergency/disaster operations will be conducted at the SEOC and/or near at the incident site. A joint information system (JIS) of public information personnel from all affected jurisdictions, agencies, and private sector organizations may be established. If appropriate, representatives of those jurisdictions may provide emergency public information from a joint information center (JIC). Under some circumstances, state agencies or departments may issue press statements. However, these statements must but be coordinated with ESF-15 prior to release.
- H. Situation briefings, press conferences, taped messages, photographs, news accounts, statistics on injuries and fatalities, and other information shall be provided to the news media as appropriate, to include information targeted at non-English speaking individuals and or special needs populations.
- I. The state will provide similar materials and briefings for state and federal officials and coordinate state and local information/news releases with related federal, state, and local agencies and officials. ESF-15 will coordinate with the Governor's Director of Communications regarding such activities.

- J. ESF-15 will consult with appropriate department or agency heads concerning implementation of emergency or disaster public information activities. Timely and continuing information to the Governor's Director of Communications will be provided, and appropriate recommendations will be made if requested.

#### **IV. ESF ACTIONS**

##### **A. Preparedness**

1. Develop a public information program to educate the public regarding the effects of common, emergency, and disaster situations.
2. Develop plans to coordinate with international, national, state and local news media for emergency operations, before, during and after emergency situations.
3. Develop plans to conduct a multi-agency/jurisdiction coordinated public information program during emergencies and disasters.
4. Develop plans and programs to educate news media that ESF-15 is the primary information center during emergency situations, unless otherwise directed by the Governor's Director of Communications.
5. Develop procedures to organize and operate a SERT media briefing area and/or a joint information center.
6. Develop and maintain multi-lingual pre-scripted EAS messages, news releases, and public service announcements, for all hazards to include hurricanes, earthquakes, nuclear incidents, and dam failures.
7. Encourage development of disaster plans and kits for the public.
8. Provide evacuation information to the affected public.
9. Participate in state exercises and conduct, at least annually, an ESF-15 exercise to validate this annex and supporting SOPs.
10. Update public information responder listing, as necessary.
11. Develop and implement a training program for all ESF members.
12. Develop and maintain a roster with contact information of all ESF personnel.

13. Annually review the Department of Homeland Security Universal Task List and integrate tasks as appropriate.
14. Ensure all ESF-15 personnel integrate NIMS principles in all planning. All ESF personnel will complete all required NIMS training, as outlined in the 2006 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) training guidance.
15. Secure lists of qualified interpreters/translators to relay public information.

B. Response

1. Alert agencies whose personnel, equipment, or other resources may be used.
2. Provide timely and accurate EAS messages and news releases in common language and terminology to inform the public. Coordinate with established hotline systems.
3. Provide emergency public information to special needs populations, as well as non-English speaking individuals.
4. Coordinate with news media regarding emergency operations.
5. Provide mass notification to urban and rural populations and provide periodic media updates.
6. Execute a multi-agency/jurisdiction coordinated public information program.
7. Organize and operate a SERT press briefing area and a joint information center, as appropriate.
8. Supplement local emergency management public information operations, as necessary, and when resources are available.

C. Recovery

1. Continue public information activities to include updating the public on recovery efforts.
2. Anticipate and plan for arrival of, and coordination with, FEMA, ESF-15 personnel in the SEOC, and the Joint Field Office (JFO).
3. Process and disseminate disaster welfare and family reunification information.

4. In coordination with each ESF, ensure that related emergency information can be provided to the public concerning safety and resources required for disaster recovery.
5. Make communications channels available so appropriate information can be disseminated by ESF-15 (Public Information) to the public concerning safety and resources required for disaster recovery.

D. Mitigation

1. Support and plan for mitigation measures.
2. Support requests and directives resulting from the Governor and/or FEMA concerning mitigation and/or re-development activities.
3. Document matters that may be needed for inclusion in agency or state/federal briefings, situation reports and action plans.

V. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. Office of The Adjutant General, South Carolina Emergency Management Division

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to staff ESF-15 in the SEOC.
2. Notify all ESF-15 supporting agencies upon activation.
3. Develop and implement a training program regarding EOC operations/processes for all ESF-15 members.
4. Develop and maintain, with input from participating agencies, a roster with contact information of all ESF personnel.
5. Develop a public information program to educate the public regarding the effects of emergency and disaster situations.
6. Develop plans to coordinate with news media for emergency operations, before, during and after an emergency.
7. Develop plans to conduct a multi-agency/jurisdiction coordinated public information program during emergency and disaster situations.

8. Develop plans and programs to educate news media that ESF-15 is the primary information center during emergency situations, unless otherwise directed by the Governor's Director of Communications.
9. Develop procedures to organize and operate a SERT media briefing area and/or a joint information center.
10. Develop pre-scripted EAS messages and news releases for all hazards to include hurricanes, earthquakes, nuclear incidents, and dam failures.

B. SC Department of Health and Environmental Control

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

C. SC Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

D. SC Department of Agriculture

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

E. SC Department of Natural Resources

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

F. SC Commission for Minority Affairs

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. In coordination with SCEMD Public Information develop and disseminate written Spanish language disaster /preparedness Public Service Announcements (PSAs), news releases, and other disaster related public information to local/county emergency management offices, and applicable broadcasts/print media outlets.
3. During periods of activation and at other times as requested, provide bi-lingual services during print/on-air broadcast media interviews, press conferences, and other live media events.
4. Develop plans/procedures to ensure widest distribution of disaster information via Spanish language print and broadcast media outlets.

G. SC Law Enforcement Division

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

H. SC Department of Labor License and Regulation

1. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-15 during periods of activation.
2. Provide personnel to augment ESF-15 during emergencies and disasters.

**VI. FEDERAL INTERFACE**

- A. This annex is supported by the National Response Plan ESF-15, Public Information and External Communications.
- B. Federal ESF-15 consists of the following functional components: Community Relations, Congressional Affairs, International Affairs, Public Affairs, State and Local Coordination, and Tribal Affairs.

- C. At the regional level a Public Affairs Officer, assigned to the Principal Federal Official (PFO), will represent ESF-15 in coordinating with state and local officials. Public information personnel will arrive with the Emergency Response Team (ERT), will initially co-locate with the SEOC, and then operate from either the Joint Field Office (JFO) or Disaster Field Office (DFO).
- D. All ESF-15 personnel will be familiar with the National Response Plan (NRP) and the corresponding annex with Federal counterpart concepts, actions and responsibilities. This familiarization will include but not be limited to the make up, functions and responsibilities of the Emergency Response Team – Advanced Element (ERT-A), Interagency Incident Management Groups (IIMG) and the Joint Field Office (JFO).
- E. State ESF-15 will coordinate with Federal ESF-15 to obtain federal assistance as required.